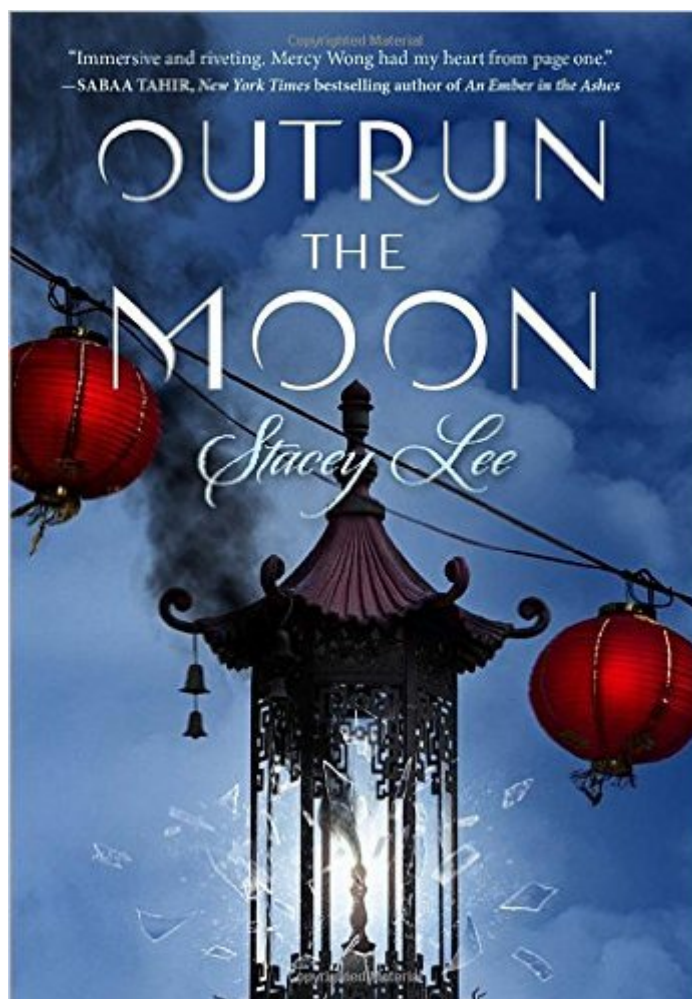


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# Outrun The Moon



## Synopsis

From the author of the critically acclaimed *Under a Painted Sky*, an unforgettable story of determination set against a backdrop of devastating tragedy. Perfect for fans of *Code Name Verity*.

San Francisco, 1906: Fifteen-year-old Mercy Wong is determined to break from the poverty of Chinatown, and an education at St. Clare's School for Girls is her best hope. Although St. Clare's is off-limits to all but the wealthiest white girls, Mercy gains admittance through a mix of cunning and a little bribery, only to discover that getting in was the easiest part. Not to be undone by a bunch of spoiled heiresses, Mercy stands strong until disaster strikes. On April 18, a historic earthquake rocks San Francisco, destroying Mercy's home and school. Now she's forced to wait with her classmates for their families in a temporary park encampment. Though fires might rage, and the city may be in shambles, Mercy can't sit by while they wait for the army to bring help—she still has the bossy cheeks that mark her as someone who gets things done. But what can one teenage girl do to heal so many suffering in her broken city? Stacey Lee masterfully crafts another remarkable novel set against a unique historical backdrop. Strong-willed Mercy Wong leads a cast of diverse characters in this extraordinary tale of survival.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars See all reviews (50 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Stacey Lee's *Outrun the Moon* is an extraordinary novel, a combination of historical fiction and a YA coming-of-age story about a young Chinese-American girl in San Francisco whose pursuit of her

dream is interrupted by the Great Earthquake of 1906 that devastated the city. Mercy Wong is fifteen years old, a Chinese-American girl living in San Francisco's Chinatown with her parents and younger brother. Life is hard - her father works long and grueling hours in his laundry, her mother helps out with occasional fortune-telling, and her younger brother suffers from weak lungs - but Mercy is enterprising, ambitious and tenacious... and determined to find a way to get her family out of poverty-ridden Chinatown to a better life in the world beyond. And Mercy has a plan: to make her dream come true, she must first gain entry to the prestigious St. Clare's School for Girl where the elite - and exclusively white - families of San Francisco send their daughters for an education. With no money to pay for it, no family connections, and the racial and class prejudices of the time all set against her, her chances are seemingly nil. But Mercy has a plan for that too. And she also has her high cheekbones that her fortune-telling mom says are "bossy cheeks", a sign of inner assertiveness and will. And she has Mrs. Lowry's *The Book for Business-Minded Women* as her constant source of both inspiration and guidance. One of the things that really adds to *Outrun the Moon* as a good read is Ms. Lee's extensive research that really brings the period and the place of 1906 San Francisco to life, the vivid details immersing the reader in the look and feel of Mercy's San Francisco. And of what it was like to have been there when the Great Earthquake hit and to deal with the devastation and chaos that followed in its wake. But the other thing that I much appreciated in *Outrun the Moon* was the complexity of the characters and of their relationships to each other, and the complexity of the social structures and attitudes that existed at that time and place. All of which make the characters believable and engaging, each having their individual merits and flaws, their strengths and their frailties, and the little quirks and characteristics that make us come to care about them. Her best friend - Tom - is Chinese-American like her, and like her, he wants to forge a new path for himself that means experimenting with the budding field of aviation instead of following in his father's footsteps and becoming a traditional Chinese herbalist. Just as Mercy wants a different path for her younger brother, Jack, so that he won't have to do the backbreaking work of a laundryman like their father. Needless to say these dreams cause considerable tension in both families where tradition and paternal authority are powerful forces. A lot of what makes the story work are the surprises and discoveries Mercy makes along the way. An enemy turns into an unexpected ally. Hidden talents are discovered. And if sometimes certain people seem disagreeable and hard to get along with, sometimes, she learns, there are reasons they are the way they are, causing her to see them in a different light. Part of growing up, Mercy learns, is to challenge assumptions, not only those of others about her but also of her own about them as well. Another plus, in my opinion, is that Ms. Lee does not treat her characters with kid gloves, Mercy in particular.

In the course of the novel, Mercy has to deal with the all-too-real problems young people must sometimes face, like having to deal with setbacks, at school and in her personal life as she works towards her dreams. And sometimes, even having to experience tragedy and even death. In the actual earthquake and the subsequent fires that broke out, 80% of San Francisco was destroyed. Thousands of people died and hundreds of thousands were left homeless. It is not a spoiler to say that some of the characters in *Outrun the Moon* do not make it either. It is a testament to Ms. Lee's writing skill that you come to care about these characters so much that when death strikes, either directly or indirectly, you feel it as intensely as the characters' themselves do. Highly, highly recommended to anyone interested in the Great San Francisco Earthquake of 1906, in what life was like for Chinese-Americans back then, or in reading a truly engaging can't-put-it-down story of a young girl going up against incredible odds and persevering in spite of everything.

Grade: B+ An e-galley was provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review. I can't tell y'all how much I love historical fiction, especially when the author gets me invested in the story and characters. Stacey Lee is great at creating strong characters that I care about: first Samantha in *Under a Painted Sky* and now Mercy in *Outrun the Moon*. Mercy is driven and doesn't give up easily. She fights for her happiness, and she is kind, even if she is careful with her kindness. She mainly reserves it for her family, especially her brother, and those who have earned it, but she also helps the headmistress of St. Clare's, even when many would say the woman doesn't deserve Mercy's help. I loved the Mrs. Lowry plot thread. It added depth to Mercy's character and was such a great motivating factor. The best part of the St. Clare's storyline is that I probably would've read a whole book about just that. I even forgot the earthquake was going to happen because I was so invested in Mercy at the school. I liked how the earthquake shook up (pun intended) the dynamics of the girls at the school. Disasters create strong bonds that might not have happened otherwise, and that's certainly the case here. The earthquake also meant we got to know the supporting characters a little better, and I appreciated that development for a lot of them. The earthquake also caused a lot of sadness and, not gonna lie, there was one moment where my heart sank and I wanted to hug Mercy. I didn't cry, but I don't cry during a lot of books. On another note, the romance in this book is minor, and I think it needed a little more attention to make me care about Tom with Mercy. The Verdict: Really good. There just wasn't that extra oomph to make this a five-star favorite read of mine.

The last two sentences will absolutely break you. I completely lost it. It's like I was holding Mercy's

journey and could finally let go. Lee's command of historical fiction and diversity here and in her other works remain consistently wonderful. This book took me far longer to read because I continuously looked up events or cultural references that intrigued me. Even though I live right outside of San Francisco, I still have so much to learn about the city's diverse population and deep culture. *Outrun the Moon* kept me going down the Google hole, learning more than I ever could in any history class. Mercy Wong is one of the strongest female characters you'll ever have the pleasure of meeting. She's determined but not stubborn, setting her own course in order to better her situation as well as her family's. She meets and surrounds herded with a group of people who each have their own strengths and she helps them develop into the people I imagine they later become. *Outrun the Moon* is a story of hope in a time of extreme adversity. There's racial tension and discrimination which isn't thrown to the wayside or unfairly represented. History is not ignored but rather this is a story of what could be.\*\*\*I won a copy of *Outrun the Moon* on GR Giveaways and while I feel SUPER lucky, it did not impact my opinion of the book.

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